

Research Brief

The Emerging Workforce Initiative

February 2008

Disconnected Youth and Young Adults: Data from Louisville and Comparison Communities

Most youth believe they will finish college and be successful. More than 90% of 10th graders surveyed in 2003 planned to attend college, including students from limited income families or students with low academic achievement (83.2% and 75.9% respectively).¹ Although most youth understand their future path is not certain or easy, they believe they will succeed in college and in the workplace.² Optimism and opportunity abound.

Unfortunately, too many young adults find their path to success full of unexpected and unnecessary pitfalls. Graduation from high school or college is more difficult than many anticipate and finding adequate employment without an education is a challenge. Some young people opt out of both school and work, becoming “disconnected” from their community’s economic and social benefits. Often considered unprepared for family sustaining employment and lacking basic and job skills, disconnected young people become “lost opportunities” to their communities.

To prepare a well-qualified emerging workforce, communities must acknowledge the size of and issues impacting its population of disconnected young people. This brief reviews the estimated number of disconnected youth and young adults in Louisville Metro area. For context, the number of disconnected youth and young adults from Kentucky, the United States, and eight “competitor” communities are also presented.

Data

The U.S. Census provides data on “disconnected” young people, defined as:

- Youth age 16 – 19 who are not in school and not working, and
- Young adults age 18 – 24 who are not in school and not working and have not completed education beyond high school.

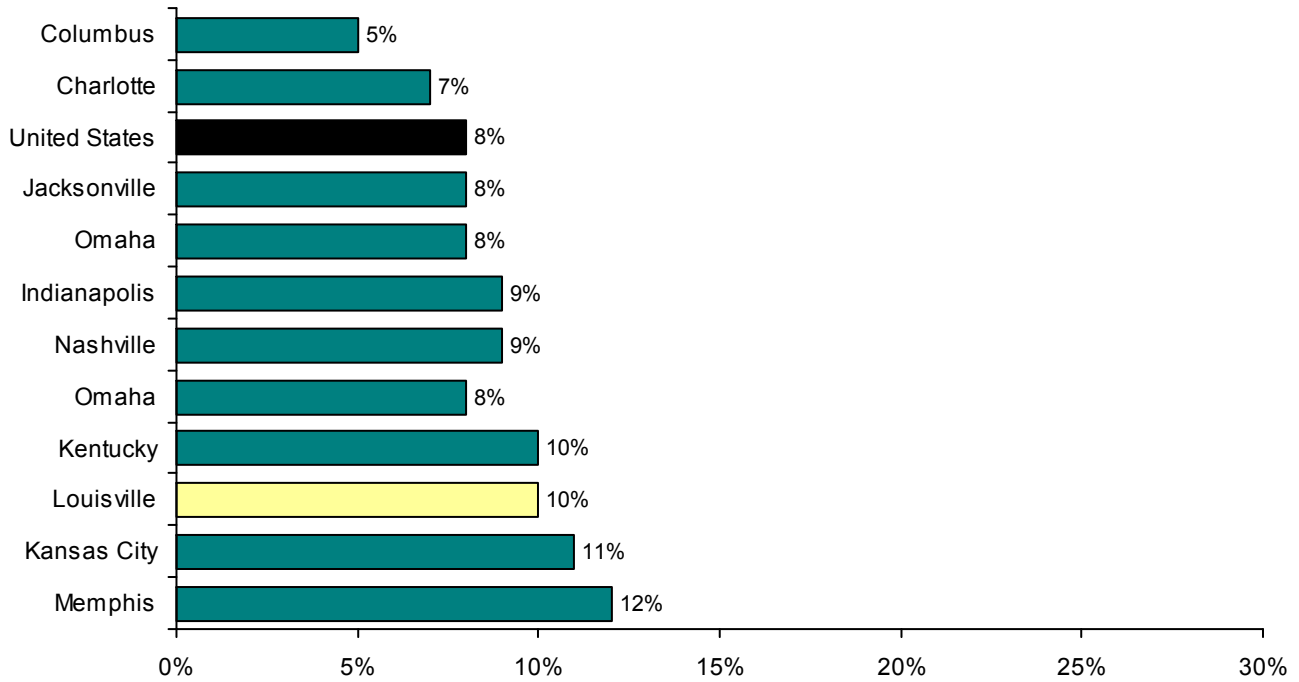
These definitions exclude individuals not in the labor market, such as those living in institutions, hospitals or prisons. While young people with disabilities, prior criminal histories, parenting teens, low academic performance, economic disadvantages and males are thought to be over-represented in the population of disconnected youth and young adults, this report will not disaggregate data on these characteristics.

This brief compares data on Louisville’s population of disconnected young people to data available on eight of Louisville’s “peer” communities. Peer communities were determined by prior analyses to have similar size, assets and challenges.³ Table 1 outlines the approximate number of disconnected youth and young adults in Louisville and comparison regions and communities, as calculated by the Annie E Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center. The table also includes the percentage of the youth and young adult population estimated to be disconnected. The estimations may not completely account for the overlap in categories of disconnected “youth” and “young adult”. Charts 1 and 2 illustrate these data graphically.

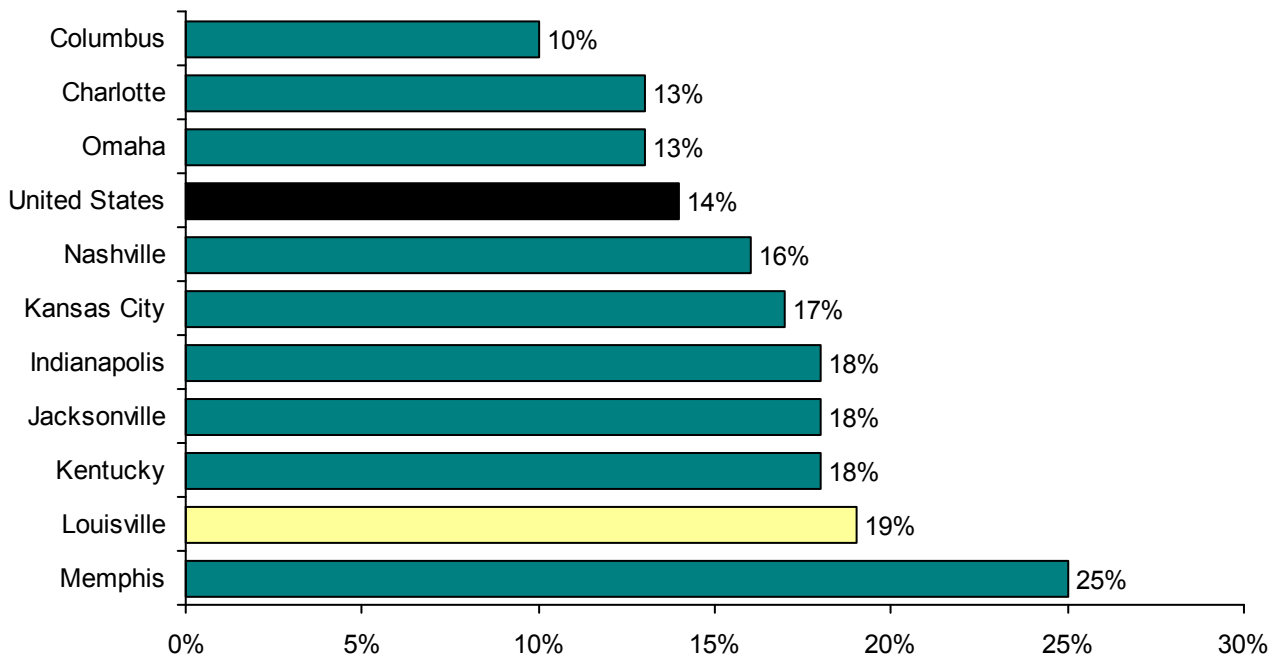
**Table 1: Disconnected Youth and Young Adults in Louisville and Peer Communities
(2006 estimates of Census Data) ⁴**

	16 to 19 year olds not attending school, not working		Persons age 18-24 not attending school, not working, and no degree beyond high school	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
United States	1,355,000	8 %	3,710,000	14 %
Kentucky	23,000	10 %	61,000	18 %
Charlotte	2,000	7 %	6,000	13 %
Columbus	2,000	5 %	8,000	10 %
Indianapolis	4,000	9 %	10,000	18 %
Jacksonville	3,000	8 %	11,000	18 %
Kansas City	2,000	11 %	5,000	17 %
Louisville	3,000	10 %	7,000	19 %
Memphis	5,000	12 %	14,000	25 %
Nashville	3,000	9 %	7,000	16 %
Omaha	2,000	8 %	5,000	13 %

**Chart 1: Percentage of Youth Population (16 - 19 years)
Considered "Disconnected"**



**Chart 2: Percentage of Young Adult Population (18 to 24 years)
Considered "Disconnected"**



Conclusions

According to these data, Louisville youth age 16 to 19 and young adults age 18 to 24 are “disconnected” at higher percentages than young people living in most peer communities, the state of Kentucky and the United States as a whole. Of Louisville’s 76,000 young people (2006 Census estimate of the population of 16 to 24 year olds), approximately 10,000 are not working, not in school and likely do not have any training or education after high school. These individuals are not in prison or institutionalized; they are simply not participating in the workforce or learning skills. It is likely these young people will have difficulty supporting their families if they don’t “re-engage” in the workforce and or return for more education.

Notes

1 Wirt, J., Choy, S., Rooney, P., S., Sen, A., and Tobin, R. (2004). The Condition of Education 2004 (NCES 2004-077). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, pg 60.

2 Schneider, B., Stevenson, D., (1999). The Ambitious Generation: America’s Teenagers Motivated but Directionless. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pg 4.

3 Gatz, C., (2005). The Competitive City Report. Louisville, KY: The Greater Louisville Project.

4 Annie E Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center; Data obtained from website 2/18/2008:
<http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter/>

Data Sources: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, 2001 Supplementary Survey, 2002 through 2006 American Community Survey.

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The Emerging Workforce Initiative is committed to helping prepare Louisville’s youth and young adults for work the community needs.